

Message Text

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44

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SCCT-01 IO-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /081 W
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R 171107Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8625

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1460

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, LE, SY, PLO

SUBJECT: FATAH NOTABLE CALLS FOR SINGLE PALESTINIAN FRONT

1. ABU IYAD (SALAH KHALAF), SPEAKING AT MASS MEETINGS FEB 15 IN BEIRUT CINEMA, ISSUED STRONG CALL FOR SINGLE PALESTINIAN FRONT EMBRACING ALL PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATIONS WITHOUT EXCEPTION. AS DESCRIBED, TASK OF NEW FRONT WOULD BE TO CONFRONT "IMPERIALIST-ZIONIST PLOTS INCLUDING ATTEMPT OF KING HUSSEIN TO IMPOSE HIS TUTELAGE OVER PALESTINIAN PEOPLE." RECALLING EFFORTS BY UNNAMED ARAB REGIMES TO GAIN CONTROL OF PALESTINIANS DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, ABU IYAD DECLARED THAT THE PALESTINIANS WILL PRESERVE THEIR AUTONOMY FROM ALL REGIMES, "WHETHER REACTIONARY, PROGRESSIVE OR OTHER." FATAH, HE REVEALED, HAS ALREADY UNDERTAKEN CONTACTS WITH ALL PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATIONS FOR THE PURPOSE OF PURSUING PALESTINIAN NATIONAL UNITY.

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2. COMMENT: ABU IYAD'S REMARKS ARE A CLEAR INVITATION FOR THE ORGANIZATIONS OF THE "REJECTION FRONT" (PFLP, FPLP-GC AND AFL) TO CLOSE RANKS WITH FATAH AT THE PRESENT TIME. AS THE LEADING LIGHT OF FATAH'S LEFT WING AND THE INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBLE FOR RELATIONS WITH THE PALESTINIAN LEFTISTS, INCLUDING THE "REJECTIONISTS," MOST OBSERVERS AGREE THAT ABU IYAD IS SPEAKING FOR THE FATAH/PLO LEADERSHIP (I.E., 'ARAFAT) IN LAUNCHING THIS APPEAL.

3. WE HAVE A RELIABLE FIRST-HAND REPORT OF 'ARAFAT'S DEEP PERSONAL ANGER AT THE DECISION OF THE JORDANIAN GOVT TO RECONVENE PARLIAMENT AND THEREBY DALL INTO QUESTION, IN PALESTINIAN EYES, THE POSITION OF THE PLO S THE SOLE LEGITIMATE REP OF THE PLAESTINIANS. ABU IYAD MAKES REFERENCE TO THIS DEVELOPMENT IN HIS SPEECH, BUT JORDANIAN ACTIONS,(
(ALWAYS A
"SAFE" SUBJECT FOR DIATRIBES, ARE NOT THE PARAMOUNT SUBJECT OF FATAH CONCERN AT THIS JUNCTURE.

4. ABU IYAD HAS PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE POLICY OF "PROGRESSIVE" ARAB REGIMES (IN LENGTHY INTERVIEW BEING TRANSMITTED BY AIRGRAM) AND IT IUS NO SECRET THAT FATAH/PLO ARE HIGHLY UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE INCREASE IN SYRIAN INFLUENCE LOCALLY THAT THE MEDIATION OF THE LEBANESKE CRISIS HAS BROUGHT. 'ARAFAT,BSWHO HAS HISTORICALLY SOUGHT TO AVOID THE :RUSHING EMBRACE OF ANY ARAB REGIME, BELIEVES THAT EVEN THE JORDANIAN PARLIAMENTARY MOVE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN MADE WITHOUT THE ACQUIESCENCE OF DAMASCUS. HE IS PROBABLY EVEN MORE CONCERNED WITH SYRIAN INTENTIONS IN LEBANON. SHAFIQ AL HOUT, DIRECTOR OF BEIRUT PLO OFFICE, TOLD EMBASSY CONTACT FEB 13 THAT PLO NEEDS SYRIANS AND DOES NOT RPT NOT BELIEVE AT THIS TIME THAT DAMASCUS SEEKS TO CONVERT PLO INTO MERE SYRIAN PUPPET. AT SAME TIME, HE CONCEDED THAT PLO/FATAH WOULD STRENGTHEN THEIR TIES WITH EGYPT AND IRAQ AS A HEDGE AGAINST SYRIAK IN THE FUTURE. HABBASH AND OTHER PFLP LUMINARIES, WITH WHOM ASSOCIATED PRESS (AP) SPOKE LATE LAST WEEK, WERE PREDICTABLY VIRULENT IN THEIR DENUNCIATIONS OF THE SYRIANS, BUT INSISTED THAT SUCH ATTACKS BE KEPT OUT OF THE PUBLIC RECORD. AHMED JABRIL (PFLP-GC), WHO WE NOTE IS PRESENTLY IN DAMASCUS
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AND MET PRES ASAD FEB 15, WAS LESS SQUEAMISH RE HIS CRITICISM TO AP INTERVIEWER OF SYRIAN POLICY IN LEBANON, REINFORKCING CONVICTION OF MANY KNOWLEDGEABLE OBSERVERS THAT JABRIL IS, IN PART AT LEAST, A SYRIAN STALKING HORSE IN THEREJECTIONIST" CAMP.

5. FATAH'S NOD IN THE DIRECTION OF THE "REJECTIONISTS" IS A NATURAL REACTION IN LIGHT OF ITS SUSPICION THAT DAMASCUS MAY

EVENTUALLY EMPLOY ITS HEIGHTENED INFLUENCE IN LEBANON
EITHER TO MOLD PLO/FATAH POLICY IN SYRIAN INTERESTS OR PUSH
THE SYRIAN-SPONSORED SA'IQA AT THE EXPENSE OF FATAH. WHILE
THERE IS NOT YET CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE THAT 'ARAFAT AND CO.
HAVE PUSHED THE PANIC BUTTON RE THE SYRIAN "MENACE," THEY
ARE OBVIOUSLY MANEUVERING TO LOOSEN THE BONDS THEY
FORGED WITH DAMASCUS FOLLOWING SINCE WE KNOW THAT
FATAH DEVELOPED AT LEAST RUDIMENTARY WORKING RELATIONSHIPS
WITH "REJECTIONIST" GROUPS DURING THE DREAUN-OUT CLASHES
IN LEBANON AND TYESE MAY NOW BE PPLACED ON A MORE LASTING
FOOTING TO FACE THE POTENTIAL COMMON DANGER POSED BY
SYRIA. ON BALANCE, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE PQALESTINIAN
"MODERATES" REGARD THIS ALLIANCE OF CONVENIENCE AS A
CHALLENGE TO THEIR OBJECTIVE VIS-A-VIS A MIDDLE EAST
PEACE SETTLEMENT. THERE IS, HOWEVER, ALWAYS THE
POSSIKBILITY THAT, IN MANEUVERING TO ATTAIN SHORT-TERM GOALS
SUCH AS AUTONOMY FROM SYRIAN TUTELAGE, THEY MIGHT IN-
ADVERTANTLY FORECLOSE LONGER-RANGE OPTIONS AND PAINT
THEMSELVES IN A CORNER AS REGARDS SITUATION IN LEBANON
AND/OR ARAB-ISRAELI SETTLEMENT, WHERE THEY HAVE NO WISH
TO BE.

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